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Office of University
Communications

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Educational Film on Life and Contributions of Charles A. Cannon Premieres in October

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Comments from a Gardner-Webb University history professor are included in a new documentary film on the life and work of notable industrialist, Charles A. Cannon. Dr. Tim Vanderburg, author of “Cannon Mills and Kannapolis: Persistent Paternalism in a Textile Town,” was interviewed on the GWU campus last November by the film crew.


Dr. Timothy Vanderburg


The 60-minute documentary, “Charles A. Cannon: A Mind for Business, A Heart for People,” takes an in-depth look at the life of the visionary whose leadership and philanthropy played out on a global stage. Produced and directed by GreyHawk Films with support from The Cannon Charitable Interests, the premiere will be Oct. 15 at 4 p.m. at the Gem Theatre, 111 West 1st St., Kannapolis, N.C. The screening is free and open to the public.

Before writing his book, Vanderburg studied the Cannon family and their mill for his graduate thesis and dissertation. He was one of several people interviewed for the documentary and shared details from his book, including information about the founding of the mill by Charles’ father, James W. Cannon. Charles became the head of the mill in 1921 and led the company until his death in 1971.

“Charles Cannon was perhaps the last of the paternalist mill owners,” Vanderburg shared. “He provided work for thousands of southern workers and the wages were usually as high as unionized mills. Kannapolis was the model mill village and provided services to a degree that most mill villages did not. He left behind a legacy of philanthropy that is widespread throughout North Carolina. He gave to churches, colleges and universities, youth organizations, and for community health care. He was the driving force in the creation of Cabarrus Memorial Hospital (now Carolinas HealthCare System Northeast). His foundation now continues his philanthropic vision.”


Through family photographs, interviews with mill workers and their families, and footage recreated to bring the period to life, the film transports viewers to the mill floor and board room. Meeting the man behind the industrial powerhouse that became Cannon Mills and finding out what motivated him is central to the film, according to Bill Cannon and Robin

Hayes, Cannon's grandsons. "Our grandfather's story is rooted in a commitment to a vision of success for a small southern town," Bill Cannon said. "That vision, along with his business acumen, forward-thinking approach to industrialism and true concern for his employees, left an indelible mark on the world of manufacturing, branding and distribution."



Charles Cannon in 1930s,
photo courtesy of
Kannapolis History
Associates

Dr. Tim Vanderburg's book, "Cannon Mills and Kannapolis: Persistent Paternalism in a Textile Town," is available online via Amazon.com and other major bookstores.



Charles Cannon in 1970s,
photo courtesy of
Kannapolis History
Associates

To learn more about Charles A. Cannon: A Mind for Business, A Heart for People, visit www.charlescannonfilm.com. To learn more about The Cannon Charitable Interests, visit www.cannonfoundation.org.

film logo

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